

We Claim:

1. A method of providing mail piece franking by a party to a customer, comprising the steps of:
  - receiving a request from a customer for franking from said party, said request including mail piece information, said information comprising payment means;
  - generating an alphanumeric franking code based on an algorithm, said code related to said information;
  - transmitting said franking code to said customer;
  - affixing, by said customer, said franking code to said mail piece or mail piece;
  - receiving by said party said mail piece or mail piece with franking code affixed thereon;
  - verifying authenticity of said franking code; and
  - printing an tracking code on said mail piece or mail piece if said franking code is authentic.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said information further comprises date of purchase of said franking code.
3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said information further comprises date of purchase of said franking code. or delivery address;
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein said request is made over the Internet.
5. The method according to claim 1, wherein said request is made by a dial up computer connection.
6. The method according to claim 1, wherein said request is made by telephone.
7. The method according to claim 1, wherein said request is made by SMS.
8. The method according to claim 1, wherein said request is made by e-mail.
9. The method according to claim 1, wherein said franking code comprises a transaction number and said step of generating further comprises the step of linking and storing said transaction number and delivery address in a first database.
10. The method according to claim 9, wherein said step of verifying further comprises the steps of:
  - reading said affixed franking code and delivery address and
  - determining if a match to said read franking code and delivery address is present in said first database.
11. The method according to claim 10, wherein said step of reading is performed by a scanner comprising optical character recognition means.

12. The method according to claim 11, wherein said scanner is a videocoding device.
13. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of affixing further comprises the step of marking said mail piece or mail piece with characters indicating presence of said franking code.
14. The method according to claim 1, wherein said tracking code is a bar code.
15. The method according to claim 1, wherein said franking code comprises a character symbol and four numerals.
16. The method according to claim 1, wherein said franking code comprises a precode, daily code and resulting code, said resulting code formed by application of said daily code and precode to said algorithm.
17. The method according to claim 1, wherein said algorithm is an encryption algorithm.
18. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of verifying further comprises:
  - reading said resulting code;
  - generating a second resulting code by applying said algorithm to said precode and daily code; and
  - comparing said resulting code and second resulting code, such that matching first and second resulting codes indicates authenticity.
19. The method according to claim 18, wherein said step of reading is performed by a scanner comprising optical character recognition means.
20. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of deleting said franking code from a list of available franking codes, unless a flag is present indicating multiple use of said franking code.
21. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of printing is performed manually.
22. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of printing is performed by a printer.
23. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of printing is performed by labeling means.
24. The method according to claim 10, further comprising the steps of:
  - relaying to a third party read affixed franking code;
  - third party authenticating of said franking code; and
  - communicating results of said step of authenticating to said party.
25. The method according to claim 19, further comprising the steps of:
  - delivering said mail piece by said party if said code is authentic; and
  - halting delivery of said mail piece by said party if said code is not authentic.

26. The method according to claim 1, wherein said party is a post office.
27. The method according to claim 26, wherein said party is a national post office.
28. The method according to claim 26, wherein said party is a corporation.
29. The method according to claim 1, wherein said step of verification further comprises  
5 the steps of:
  - generating a personal identification number (PIN);
  - providing the PIN to the customer by the party;
  - storing said PIN;
  - requesting said PIN from said customer after said mail piece has been posted;
  - 10 - comparing said requested PIN to said stored PIN, wherein a match indicates authenticity of said franking code.